

9-21-1961

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Recommended Citation

Clarion-Ledger (Jackson, Miss.), "Where Have We Failed? Asks New York Paper in Race Crisis" (1961). *Clippings*. 36.
https://egrove.olemiss.edu/citizens_clip/36

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The Clarion-Ledger

R. M. HEDERMAN, 'R., Publisher
T. M. HEDERMAN Editor 1921-1948

T. M. HEDERMAN, JR. Editor
PURSER HEWITT Executive-Editor

Page 8-A JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI, THURSDAY, SEPT. 21, 1961

"Where Have We Failed?" Asks New York Paper In Race Crisis

There are definite signs, and they are increasing, that Northern people and press have come to the conclusion they have no ready solutions for race problems.

Editors who have been handing advice to the South in rather glib fashion, are coming around to the point of view that maybe they have failed in handling their own race problems while pontificating to the South about how we are mishandling our problems.

The latest "confession" comes from Syracuse, N. Y., where the Post-Standard says "we Northerners have little reason to be proud of the way we have 'made Democracy work' on the racial problems which confront all of us."

The editor says many if not most of the Negroes who have migrated to the Syracuse area would have "been infinitely happier and probably better off financially" if they had remained in the South.

But since they are in Syracuse, the Post-Standard wonders "where have we failed" in handling them?

The editorial in full said:

One of the charges heard most frequently south of the Mason-Dixon line is that Northern newspapers habitually exaggerate and overplay news of racial conflicts in the South while they frequently ignore deplorable situations in their own communities.

That there is an element of truth in this accusation can not be denied.

It is high time for many Northern editors to remove the mote from their own eyes and to take an honest look around their home cities.

Too many of us think that because we do not identify Negroes as such in crime stories, we are meeting our obligation of fighting discrimination.

Many of us boast that by deliberately playing down news of minor inter-racial conflicts in our own areas, we are doing our part to relieve tensions and to prevent more serious race riots.

This is undoubtedly true, but the press associations and the larger Northern newspapers and magazines send armies of reporters and photographers into Southern cities whenever there is a hint of trouble involving Freedom Riders of school desegregation. And all of us give the stories the full treatment on page 1 while pointing self-righteous fingers of scorn at the benighted Southland.

In Syracuse the Post-Standard has campaigned for years against sub-human living conditions in the 15th Ward, in which Syracuse Negroes were pretty much segregated until the fallen-down slums could no longer accommodate the rapidly expanding colored population

Although many fine Negro families moved without incident into former all-white neighborhoods, the lower East Side 15th Ward section is still a teeming breeding place of crime and juvenile delinquency.

Almost nowhere in the Deep South does the average Negro live under such pitiable conditions as he does in the cities of the North.

Hundreds of thousands of Negroes, who have migrated into New York State hoping for better education, greater economic opportunity and a more democratic way of life, have been bitterly disillusioned and frustrated by what they have found in the North.

Unable to find work, especially if they were brought north originally as farm laborers, many of these migrants have been forced to go on welfare, and for many "welfare" has become a permanent mode of existence.

Most of them would have been infinitely happier and probably better off financially if they had remained in the South.

All of which is by way of emphasizing that we Northerners have little reason to be proud of the way we have "made democracy work" or the racial problems which confront all of us.

Sometimes it helps to hold up a mirror to our own faults and shortcomings.

An editor of a leading New Jersey newspaper was visiting casually one day this week with the editor of one of the principal papers in Alabama. Inevitably, the race question arose, and the Northern editor remarked that he would not care to walk at night through a large section of his home city.

The Alabama editor was shocked and amazed.

"There is not one street in my community in which any white person need be afraid to go at any time," he protested. "Why are conditions so much worse in the North?"

It's a question to ponder Would you dare to stroll through Syracuse's 15th Ward at night? If not, where have we all failed?